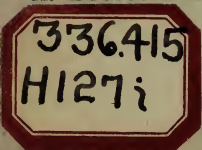


# IRISH FINANCE, AN UN-ROYAL COMMISSION, AND—A LADY.

BY

A. EGMONT HAKE.



A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

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14



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1897.

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TO  
MISS E. PALMER,  
PRESIDENT OF THE SHAMROCK CIRCLE.

---

*Had the French commanders to whom Joan of Arc first submitted her simple plan of campaign been possessed by the spirit of modern scepticism, they would certainly have ridiculed the idea of hurling back the victorious English forces by so mild an agency as a beautiful maiden with a white standard. But the French commanders were inspired by the vision before them of the maid with the banner. And they were right; for that picturesque figure was preceded by a high ideal, and followed by a patriotic people moved to devotion and sacrifice.*

*In our times, the din of party war, the clash of the battle of systems, deafen us to the promptings of our loftier sentiments; for what is there to rouse our enthusiasm? Instead of the maid with the standard, instead of the cross of Peter the Hermit, instead of the eloquence of Savonarola, we have Royal Commissions and gigantic Blue Books.*

*And yet, as long as human nature is human nature, the first condition for the advance of any good cause must be the enlistment of man's emotional nature in its favour. Never*

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*was there a time when the recognition of this fact was more urgent than now. If humanity is to be rescued from what is looked upon as the inevitable evils of our civilization; if our fellow-beings are to be snatched from under the wheels of the Juggernaut so-called Progress, it must be done by those who have the courage of their noblest emotions. We should, therefore, hail with gladness any sign of such manifestations of courage, more especially in Ireland, a country which has too long been the cockpit of party factions, sects, and systems. While, therefore, many people would look with indifference at your modest, but flourishing, Shamrock Circle, to me it is the budding of the first snowdrop, heralding the floral wealth of summer.*

*What is, then, more natural than for me to inscribe this booklet to you, the President of the Shamrock Circle, who reflect so well that patriotism and devotion to the Irish people on which the future of Ireland can alone be built? I know that among the many tributes you have received from your grateful countrymen those proceeding from the poor and the struggling have touched you most. This encourages me to dedicate to you this small work, for which I claim no greater value than that of its having been written with a sincere desire to benefit your country.*

*A. EGMONT HAKE.*

*Palace Chambers, Westminster, S.W.,  
February, 1897.*



# IRISH FINANCE.

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## I.

### A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR.

IT was getting late in the evening. We had had a hard day of it. In the morning we had received letters, telegrams, callers, all urging us to examine from a non-party, or truly Shamrock point of view, the new departure in Irish politics. The Final Report of Her Majesty's Commission on the Financial Relations between Great Britain and Ireland had been issued, and had produced effects something like those of a bombshell. The explosion had produced most extraordinary results. Irish landlords, hitherto the most Tory of the Tories, simply because other Irishmen were Home Rulers, had suddenly revolted against the Unionist leaders and climbed upon the Home Rule platforms. The many sections and sub-sections of the Irish Party had forgotten their animosity, and seemed bent at last on united action. The new-born harmony between the sons of Erin assumed a strength that might be measured by the fact that Unionist Irish landlords appeared side by side with quondam dynamiters.

Here, then, was one of those unforeseen and unexpected events which sometimes occur after a period of abortive controversy and a political *impasse*, furnishing opportunities for the advancement of obstructed causes

on new lines. The consequences of such events are simply incalculable; and if those who first brought about the Royal Commission had any inkling of the results it would lead to, they must be considered the acutest diplomatists of their time. If there be one or more opponents of the Government who planned this mine in order to embarrass the Unionists, they have every right to pat themselves on the back.

The waters have been troubled, and many are those who desire to whip them with their own lines. The Home Rulers hope to wring the far-reaching concession from the Government that Ireland is a separate State; the Protectionists hope to familiarize us with the idea of separate Irish Protection Duties; the Collectivists hope for a whole series of measures of the grandmotherly kind. No wonder, then, that the unbiassed friends of Ireland should be anxious to ascertain how they stand with regard to the new situation. Hence the present demand that we should examine the Report, or, rather, the Reports—a volume of 228 foolscap pages; that we should digest the Evidences—another volume of fearful dimensions; and that we should go into the whole question of Irish Finance in all its relations to the Empire, to the United Kingdom, to all the political parties, to all the different classes in Ireland, to the trades and industries of that island, and of Great Britain, etc. Always willing to oblige our Irish friends, we took the matter in hand early one morning, but only at about between eleven and twelve at night did it begin to dawn upon us that the fulfilment of a Herculean task was expected of us. So far, we had confined ourselves to looking for an answer to the

first question placed before the Commission—namely, “Upon what principles of comparison, and by the application of what specific standards, the relative capacity of Great Britain and Ireland to bear taxation may be most equitably determined?”

It is a most important and a most searching question, and a straightforward reply to it would bring us very near the solution of the problem of Irish Taxation. But, lo, and behold! all our scanning, reading, and plodding had been vain. These huge tomes contain no clear answer to this vital question. All those who have to struggle with these verbose Reports and Evidences will have a grudge against the Commission for having proceeded to take the evidence and to gather in the reports before they had come to an agreement regarding this first point in the terms of references.

We were both considering the idea of requesting our anxious friends to go into the question for themselves. We had found that, before we could determine how the Imperial cause—that is to say, the cause of all the individuals of the Empire—would stand in the controversy, we should require the power to interview, and to examine, a host of people whom the Commission seemed to have overlooked. It even appeared to us that such power would be insufficient, for we should require to know the real, innermost thoughts of the various people under examination—their conscientious opinions, unbiassed by party passions, class interests, and Collectivist prejudices. While we were musing over more or less fantastic devices by which to get at the truth, the atmosphere of the room became very heavy; the lights seemed to grow dim, while the bright fire receded more

and more into space. As we looked round, in order to account for these changes, we found to our great surprise that the room had been invaded by a young woman of striking beauty, but somewhat extraordinary appearance. Her classical face was surmounted by a mass of fair curls, on the top of which rested a strange contrivance—partly crown, partly hat, and partly telephone. Not being expert in ladies' toilets, I can only say that her dress was partly classic and partly that of a cyclist. In her hand she carried a note-book, and at her side hung, fan-fashion, a small hand-mirror, on the back of which was a miniature apparatus for the production of Röntgen rays. She was seated in one of the easy chairs, and seemed waiting to be addressed. For a few moments I was mute from sheer surprise at her noiseless appearance on the scene, seemingly through some other means of access than the door, which had remained closed. She evidently had read my mind ; for, after an awkward pause, she said :—

“I hardly expected to find you so astonished at my presence here. It rather pleases me, because it shows that, after all, we spirits have not become commonplace yet. I come on business. I guess I can be very useful to you in this job you have on hand.”

“The Report on Irish Finance,” I stammered.

“That’s so. I’m a first-class interviewer. I’ve my own methods, and with this little instrument—a mirror of truth, intensified by the Röntgen rays—I get at people’s thoughts and opinions, whether they will it or not.”

“In that case,” said I, “your services will be invaluable to us. But I don’t know who you are—whether

you belong to the Lord Mayor's Show or to the Drury Lane Pantomime, and shall thank you if you will tell me a little more about yourself."

"I am Julia," she replied. "Here is my card and my reference to the well-known Modern Magician and Psychical Journalist, who has several times acquainted the public with my powers. They are now at your disposal."

"And what people would you interview?" I asked.

"Oh! you must leave that to me. In the spiritual world we see clearly into these matters, and we don't waste so much time as Royal Commissions do. When I leave you, I will go straight about the business. When I'm ready to report on one interview, you will feel a sort of spasm in your right hand, and all you will have to do will be to let your hand write freely, without any interference on the part of your mind."

Though evidently a spirit, she had assumed such business-like ways that I could not help asking her her terms.

"Once upon a time," she said, "I belonged to Ireland, and the return for my services I shall expect will be that you and your political friends will do all you can to procure for poor, long-suffering Erin the prosperity and happiness which are her due. And now Good-bye."

With that the room seemed to become completely dark, but gradually the lights began to shine again, and the fire to return to its old place. My first impression was that I had been asleep, and that I had had a dream. I looked at my friend and colleague, who decidedly had been asleep, for he was just awakening. When we

came to compare notes, we found to our astonishment that we had either dreamed the same dream, or had both had the same vision. Feeling rather upset, we discarded the question of Irish Finance for the evening, and resolved to resume the subject next day.

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## II.

### JULIA INTERVIEWS A SLEEPY CONSERVATIVE PEER.

THE following morning we took the subject energetically in hand, and tried first to agree as to the "principles of comparison" and "specific standards," in order that our Commission of Two might produce a better result than Royal Commissions—namely, to create a necessity for another Royal Commission.

Import and export, we found, would not do as a standard of the tax-bearing capacity of Ireland, as there are no separate statistics for Ireland, and a great deal of traffic in imported and in to-be-exported goods between Ireland and Great Britain is going on. The population is evidently regarded as a bad standard by the malcontents, and is out of the question. The Royal Commissioners have manifestly been influenced by the Income Tax results. But it seems hardly fair that, because Ireland pays less Income Tax, she should pay



less of every other tax. It would be a premium on thriftlessness, and patriotism would prompt the Irish to do as many English business men are wont to do—pay Income Tax on one-tenth of their profits, a system which would be impossible if the officials of Somerset House displayed half as much zeal in collecting the taxes on large earned revenues as they display in collecting the taxes on small unearned incomes. Besides, those Irish who make the largest incomes make them, and pay for them, in England. The rate of wages would not do for a standard, as there are a great many poor tenants in Ireland who earn very small wages, but have other sources of income. Then there is the general consumption of the people. But, as whisky figures conspicuously in that category, while at the same time the drinking of it constitutes a voluntary payment of taxes, the conclusions based on such a standard would be absurd. It would amount to this, that the more taxes the Irish voluntarily pay by drinking whisky, the more they should be compelled to pay in the form of other taxes. It would be more practical to reverse the relations and allow a reduction in other taxes for the increased yield of the Whisky Tax. The Irish would thus have an opportunity of doing with the financial difficulty what the English, according to the late Lord Sherbrooke, did with the Alabama difficulty—drink themselves out of it. As philanthropists, we could not countenance such an arrangement; for, while it could not be denied that from a Collectivist point of view the whisky-drinking would be, under such circumstances, extremely profitable, it might be ruinous from an Individualist point of view.

The Royal Commission make much of the historical argument. Now, it is easy to say that, because such and such a thing has happened in the past, it is *right* that we should do such and such a thing now. But according to what moral is it right? Should we be guided by historical moral, by legal moral, by commercial moral, by ethical moral, or by religious moral? Finding that my colleague and I came to different conclusions, according to the different standard of moral we adopted, we rejected the historical argument altogether. Seeing that we were not likely to be more successful than the Royal Commission in lighting upon the right "principle of comparison," we felt somewhat demoralised, and were going to fall back cynically upon the principle of expediency, when suddenly a jerk at my arm caused it to swing upwards in an aggressive fashion. This at once reminded me forcibly of my dream. "Julia!" I cried; and, seizing a pen, I sat down and placed my hand upon a sheet of paper. It wrote the word "solidarity." We at once understood Julia's meaning. The solidarity between Great Britain and Ireland being an undeniable fact, it is evident that the greater the prosperity enjoyed by Ireland the better for Great Britain; and *vice versâ*. Here, then, we have the standard we require. Any degree of taxation likely to undermine the prosperity of Ireland would be a disadvantage to Great Britain, and should therefore be avoided.

How to determine what amount of taxation is compatible with the prosperous development of Irish resources was the next point. This could only be done by communicating with people of different classes in



Ireland, and with such Englishmen as have mastered the Irish Question thoroughly. In this matter Julia's services would be invaluable.

I asked her, mentally, if she had any interviews to report, and instantaneously the following answer arrived :—

Last night I interviewed a Conservative Peer. He was slumbering in his easy chair before the fire. A copy of "Degeneration" was lying open on the floor, having evidently dropped from his hands.

"I have come to interview you on the question of Irish Finance," I said.

"Thank you," was the reply. "I have had enough of Irish Finance. It is a sore point with me just now, so I would rather not discuss it. So please vanish, and let me sleep."

"I am sorry I cannot do that," I said, and held up my Truth-mirror to his face. "I am Julia, you know, and always get my own way."

"I know who you are," he replied, grumblingly ; "you are the result of that delicious lobster *mayonaise*, and your Irish Finance is nightmare."

"I suppose you disapprove of the action taken by the Irish landlords in this question?"

"Most decidedly I do. They have stuck to us in order to protect themselves from the Land scheme of the Home Rulers, and now they turn against us because they are, in many ways, interested in lower taxation. They could not have chosen a more awkward moment for their revolt. If they don't mind what they are doing, they will bring about a complete unity among the Irish factions, and thus resuscitate the Home Rule corpse."

“But don’t you think,” I asked, “that the Irish landlords have good reason for claiming a reduction in taxes, as almost two-thirds of their income have been sacrificed on the altar of party politics?”

“That’s no business of ours. We had to get into power to prevent Home Rule, which would have meant complete confiscation ; and the landlords have stood by our Party to save what they could. It is our misfortune that we are always obliged to waste our time and our power on Party measures, instead of tackling those great questions on which the welfare of all our peoples depends. The result is that both the great parties are becoming intensely unpopular ; and, if we don’t mind, we shall one day be face to face with a great Imperial Party that will supersede us all. Instead of bothering about Irish Finance, we ought to attend to the Empire. Everywhere things are getting into a mess. Strikes, labour troubles, sweating, and discontent at home. Our system in India produces poverty ; poverty produces famine, and famine produces pest. In Africa all is topsy-turvy, and nothing seems to go right. In Australia and New Zealand the most ignorant classes have taken the reins of Government, because nobody else held them, and they bid fair to ruin those splendid possessions. Is this the time for the Irish landlords to rake up the Irish Question?”

“But granted,” I said, “that things are bad everywhere, why not begin by putting things right in Ireland ? Has it never struck you that there is a great similarity in the complaints that reach you from every part of the Empire—no profits for business men, no dividends for the capitalists, and not enough wages for the working classes?”

"I've noticed it long ago," was his reply. "There is something wrong in modern economy. But have we time to find out what this 'something wrong' is? And, even if we did find it out, what could we do? We could never be in power, unless we obeyed the mandate of public opinion. We should have to convince the whole nation first; then the press would be convinced; and, when the press was convinced, the House of Commons would be convinced."

"Why don't you reverse it," I said, "and let the process of conviction start from the top?"

"Simply because we should put the Liberals in power, and that would mean much more Collectivism than we go in for, and, consequently, worse business, more poverty, and more discontent."

"I see you are not exactly on a bed of roses. But, to return to Irish Finance, will you yield to the united demand of Ireland, or what do you intend to do?"

"We intend," he said, "to have as much Irish discussion in Parliament as possible, because in this way we shall not be driven to pass more Socialistic measures. We shall resist the demand to the utmost, and, if we can't help ourselves, we must grant some small *rabais*—not in the shape of any reduction, which is impracticable, but in the shape of a grant from Imperial funds."

"You do surprise me," I exclaimed. "Do you belong to those who still adhere to the antiquated idea that funds distributed by the Government can actually benefit the people, and that such distribution can be affected without enormous loss of prosperity?"

"Of course, I don't believe that," was the rather deprecating reply. "I flatter myself that I am suffi-

ciently up to date to know that all such applications of the principles of domestic economy to a free State are ruinous to the people, especially to the working classes. But it is not a question of my opinions ; it is one of the opinions held by members of Parliament, by the hysterical section of the press, and by the Labour agitators. We could resist the demand of the new Irish Coalition, and our Cabinet retire from power ; but what would become of the Empire ?”

“Don’t you see any other way out of the difficulty except that of yielding to ruinous proposals ?” was my next question.

“No ; I don’t. There is only one way. We must avoid catastrophes, and treat the newly-enfranchised masses as children. We must let them play long enough with their inflammable toys—Collectivism and Retrogression—until they burn their fingers. When the English and Irish voters have so utterly ruined trade and industry as to bring about first famine and then pestilence among us, they may be ready to resume their onward march towards liberty and prosperity.”

As the Conservative Peer seemed greatly exhausted, I permitted him to doze off again, and went in search of a Liberal Leader.

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## III.

## A LIBERAL LEADER ON THE LIBERAL IMBROGLIO.

HE was not at home, but I found him in a stage box at the Lyric Theatre watching the performance of "The Sign of the Cross." He did not seem to be following the performance very carefully, and, leaning back in his seat, appeared intensely bored. I quietly took a place beside him and rang my telephone bell. He started when he first beheld me, and then dexterously pulled the curtain of the box a little forward and addressed me in a gallant manner and with an engaging smile.

"Perhaps," he said, "this box is reserved for the artists? If I am an intruder, I hope you will excuse me."

"On the contrary," I said, "I am the intruder. My speciality is not art, but journalism."

"You don't belong, then, to that company of Roman revellers who, in their charming draperies, seem to be having such a good time behind the scenes. Whom, then, have I the honour to address?" As the Liberal leader spoke, he glanced at my costume in a somewhat bewildered, but, to me, extremely flattering, manner.

"I am Julia, the spiritual New Woman of journalistic fame. As you know, I used to belong to your Party, and my sympathies go with progress in Ireland." With that I held my Truth-mirror up to his face. The great leader made a wry face, and muttered:—

"Ireland be ——." Then he checked himself, and

added demurely : "I beg your pardon. I mean to say that Ireland has proved a curse to our Party, to myself, and to my friends. I hope you are not here to speak about Ireland."

"But I am ; I wish to interview you about over-taxation in Ireland."

The great politician shuddered visibly. "It's a very unsuitable subject for a box in a theatre. Suppose that, instead, you told me what the current opinion is in the spiritual world of this splendid dramatic production, which so eminently realizes our views on the drama and on the Christian religion," he said, declamatorily, gracefully waving his hand towards the stage.

I explained to him that the piece had not been advertized in the spiritual world, and that, as far as I knew, none of the spirits had written to the papers about it.

"I must, therefore, trouble you," I continued, "to tell me something about the opinions of the Liberal Party on the Irish Financial Question."

"The Liberal Party," said the right honourable gentleman, with a significant curve of his lip ; "where is, and what is, the Liberal Party? Would we be where we are if the Liberals had opinions in common? Do you refer to that section of Liberals which consists of landlords, capitalists, and well-to-do people, who are dead against State Socialism being carried to that point where the confiscated wealth will, at least to some extent, replenish the pockets of the poor, instead of being wasted on Collectivist measures ; or to that section which strives to get all the wealth of the country placed in the hands of officials, to be used for the common good?"

"After the secession of the Liberal Unionists there



ought to be unanimity among the Liberals, at least on the Irish Question. For it would surely be neither consistent nor politically expedient for the Liberal Party, as at present constituted, to vote against any measure that would benefit Ireland?"

"You are right there," was his reply; "and, though I cannot answer for a party wanting both a programme and a leader, I can assure you that I, for my part, would vote for anything that would benefit Ireland; and I daresay the majority of Liberals of all shades would be eager to do the same. But that fact would not advance us much, because we should be pretty sure to disagree as to what would really benefit Ireland. Some, for instance, would be anxious that Ireland should be regarded as an entity, so that Protection Duties might be levied on imported goods from England—a step strongly objected to by most Liberals. Others would be willing to take off part of the tax-burden from the Irish shoulders, and put them on the English; and to this many would object, especially because it would lessen the Wage Fund and lower wages in England. Then, again, we have a large section who believe, not that taxes in Ireland are too high, but that they are placed on the wrong people. These of our followers are bent on increasing taxes, and, still more, local rates for Socialistic purposes; but they would put the whole of the taxes on the landlords, and would be only too glad to tax them out of existence. Some of us would lower the excise on spirits, as this represents the national drink of the Irish; but our powerful teetotal faction would strenuously oppose this, and would rather increase the excise on spirit; and so on *ad infinitum*."

"Under such circumstances," I could not help remarking, "it will be very difficult for you to draw up a programme. How on earth will you manage it?"

"If I have anything to do with it," he replied, adding in a tone of despair, "which is not likely, I would set my face against all programmes and prevent any intelligible expression of opinion on Irish Finance as far as our side is concerned. Our best policy is to worry the Government for a fair and just settlement of the question, and leave them the initiative—in fact, to follow the example of the Home Rulers, who clamour for Home Rule without explaining what Home Rule really is. It was Gladstone's two attempts to define Home Rule that broke up our Party."

"But, surely, a Party when in power must do something, must have some constructive policy?"

"Oh, that was all right in the old palmy days of Liberalism, when patriotism and philanthropy, guided by science and experience, pulled in the same direction as popularity. Now-a-days it would be a folly to have any decisive opinion on any great questions. The best thing a Party desirous of remaining in power can do is to occupy Parliament and the Press with minor questions likely to maintain the present party division—I mean questions which, if they do no good to anybody, at least do some harm to our opponents, and thus keep the game going."

"Don't you think such a policy rather cynical?"

"It may appear so," he said philosophically; "but where is the alternative? If we were to go in for an heroic programme, as Cobden and Bright did—let us say, commercial and industrial development—we should



simply shut ourselves out from power and keep the Conservatives in permanently—the very worst thing, in my opinion, that could happen to the country and to the Empire.”

“Of course you would think so,” I said; “but don’t you think it would be better for the country if the party-strife ceased, and that Parliament devoted itself to the great national questions?”

“Of course I do,” he replied, emphatically; “but I must say about the cessation of party strife as Alphonse Karr said about the abolition of capital punishment—let killing be stopped, but let the murderers begin.”

“And the Conservatives would be sure to say the same thing about you. It’s always the old story. But could you not tell me more about your future action with regard to the Irish Finance Question?”

“I can only tell you what I know myself, that our attitude towards this question, which is, after all, not a vital one, will be dictated by what is best for the masses throughout the Empire.”

“And that is ——?” I inquired.

“Why, that the Liberals get into power as soon as possible.”

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## IV.

## THE PEASANT AND THE PEER.

THAT day we received no further reports from Julia. I refrained from calling upon her during the greater part of the next day ; but in the afternoon I tried my best to establish a communication. At first I got no reply at all ; but finally one arrived, which was as decisive as it was brief. It ran thus : " Leave me alone ; I'm busy in Ireland."

The next morning, however, numerous Irish reports came in.

I have been interviewing, she said, Pat O'Flinn, in his cottage in Killarney. For several reasons I deemed him a superior type of the small Irish cultivator. Knowing this class of people to be rather behind-hand in psychical matters, and ignorantly sceptical about modern spirits who have not been canonized, and apt to regard me as one of the nixies, gnomes, or fairies before whom they are wont to run away, I disguised myself as an ordinary every-day reporter. I soon found, however, that this was a mistake. Before I could get Pat to disclose his opinions, he wanted to cross-examine me. He wanted to know with what paper I was connected ; to what Party, or to what faction, that paper belonged ; whether my report would be published ; whether the priest of the place approved of my paper ; whether his landlord was likely to read it ; whether I knew, and was on good terms with, Mr. —,

who, I understood, was a powerful and somewhat hot-tempered extremist in the Home Rule camp. When I had replied, as I thought, satisfactorily to all these questions, Pat suddenly declared that he had no opinions at all. He said he had never seen anyone get anything out of opinions, and looked upon them as sometimes dangerous and expensive luxuries. I hoped at least he might tell me something about his own circumstances; but I was again disappointed. When I asked him how much rent he paid for his farm, he again replied with another question: "Sure an' if I told yer honour, it wouldn't be you that would lower it." Whereupon I left him, in order to change my plan of operations.

I assumed the disguise of a young Irish priest on a walking tour, and met my man as he was proceeding along the road. I entered into conversation with him, and, as we came up to the nearest inn—or, shall I say, hotel?—I asked him to partake of a cup of tea. He accepted my invitation, but not very cheerfully, and we entered an empty room, on the glass door of which the words "Saloon Bar" were emblazoned. We sat down at a table, and, as I was about to order the tea, Pat explained that he was not much of a tea-drinker, and could he take something else instead. "Certainly," I said. "What would you like to take?"

He looked at me hard as he said hesitatingly: "If yer riverence plazes, I'll take some soda-water."

"Surely," said I, as the waitress lingered for the order, "you would like some whisky in your soda-water."

"That I would, but I was afraid that yer riverence moightn't approve of the dhrop."

"Well, Mr. O'Flinn, I'm a teetotaler myself, but you know the Council of Trent put a fast on the meat and not on the drink, and I like Irishmen to have their choice." Whereupon I asked the waitress to bring one cup of tea and some whisky and soda. Pat amended my instructions, and told the girl to bring only a very little soda ; and when she explained that she could not bring less than a bottle, having no syphons in the house in the winter, Pat protested that he could not drink a bottle, and, as he thought it a great pity to waste the precious stuff and a shame to put me to all the expense, he said he would not mind having no soda for once.

When the refreshment had been served, I remarked to my guest that it was more patriotic to drink whisky, as in so doing you contribute to the Irish revenue, instead of soda, on which there was no Excise.

"Faith," exclaimed Pat, with a twinkle in his eye, "sure an' the soda wather comes from Bilfast, and is as orange as the orange wine the same blagueyards sell."

In order to lead the conversation to my subject, I remarked there was a great talk just now about Irish taxes, and asked him whether anyone had asked his opinion on that question, as they had asked mine.

Pat assumed a look of importance, took a long draught from his glass, threw himself back in his chair, and said :

"So they've asked your opinion, too, have they? It's only a little while ago a spalpeen who writes for the newspapers comes along talkin' to me about taxation ; but as I couldn't make him out, I hunted him as fast as he could lay leg to the ground. But with your riverence sure it's a different matter. I can talk the leg out of a pot, and be aisy with you. It's my head

that's so full of Irish taxation that I think it'll burst the heart in me body if I don't spake to someone about it. Af coorse, we are payin' a great deal more taxes than we ought to be doin', and when a man keeps payin' out more than he has, he'll soon have the rain comin' through his roof. Just look at the whisky, yer riverence. When we want to drink a pennyworth of whisky we have to pay somethin' like thrupence to the Government. They tell us we ought to drink ale instead of the crater; but what do we want with more of a thirst than we've got already? I know ale drinkers who are always thirsty, and with all the salt that's in the ale, its no wonder. To get over the salt they must drink more ale, and to get over the ale they must drink more whisky. Sure, if the English have the right to tax us, that's no reason why they should have the right to tell us what to drink; and by puttin' all that big tax on whisky they're obligin' us either to drink ale or water, or to ruin ourselves with whisky. It's me-self would like to drink champagne, savin' yer riverence's presence, or the gran' old hock in the sojer bottles, or claret, an' the rest of it; but, sure, I can't afford it. Those are the drinks of the landlord up there, and his Castle friends; and there is mighty little taxing of what they like and can afford. Over-taxed is it, begorrah? I'm the bhoy who knows we are over-taxed. If you reckon it out, and remember how much the stuff that the rich man drinks costs, you'll find that the poor man who drinks whisky pays about ten times as much as the rich man pays on his wine. But we don't finish with the business there. Listen here, now. If taxation is fair, the taxation should be in proportion to a man's income.

If the man who drinks his wine and the poor creature who can only afford whisky had the same income, I'll bet the whisky drinker pays ten times more than the wine drinker. But if the rich man's income is £10,000, and the poor man's income is £50, the poor man pays 200 times, or 20,000 per cent., more than the rich man pays. But wait till I tell ye! If the rich man who pays out of his surplus is in justice bound to pay a higher rate of taxation than the poor man—which would only be according to what we were taught in the catechism—I'm blest if the thing wouldn't look queerer still."

"Well, Mr. O'Flinn," I could not help exclaiming, "you do put it strong."

"But, sure, that's the gospel truth, father. It's the same thing with tea, coffee, chocolate, and tobacco. I have in my house my ould mother (God be good to her!), my mother-in-law, and the whole four of me daughters. Every one of those six women drinks tea and coffee. It's the only thing they have to cheer them in their life. One of my boys is a poor weak creature, and I have to keep cocoa for him. Now, then! Let yer riverence count up what I have to pay in taxes every day, and how the whole of it fits in with me income, and how it stands to the tax paid on tea by Lord S——, who has sorra' a wife to his name, and who drinks only a fancy tea at five shillings a-pound. Then you can think how much that man, in justice, ought to pay in taxes, so that what he gives up for the Government should be equal to what I do, according, mind you, to what I make a year. Or, just to make the thing look as it really is, think how much he'd have to pay before he felt the tax as much as me. Bedad! it's a mighty



hard thing for a man like me to talk about, because I've got no larnin' ; but, glory be to God, I understand it all the same. Now, here's one o' thim circulars that's been sent to me, and which makes it as clear as daylight. Your riverence can put it in your pocket and read the whole of it, if you think I'm wrong ; but, sure, I tell you no lie !”

“From the point of view of abstract justice, you are perfectly right. No one can deny that,” I said. “But Governments and legislators are not guided by a sense of abstract justice. In all worldly matters we must be guided by expediency, and the most important of all expediencies are those which tend to uphold civilization.”

Pat shook his head and said, sarcastically : “Faith ! expediency is a grand word, but, sure, there are two sorts of them murtherin' expediencies—the rich man's and the poor man's. Now, it seems to me that the rich man's expediency has been kept goin' too long, and that the time has come to give a chance to the poor man's expediency.”

“Well, Mr. O'Flinn, there are certain persons who claim that they have found an expediency that would suit both the rich and the poor. But, while we are on this chapter, have you any other taxation grievances ?”

“Arrah whist ! your riverence,” Pat said in a low voice, leaning over the table ; “between me and you and the door, we have a thumpin' big one. It isn't only the Saxon that sucks us dry—begorra ! there are plenty of Irishmen to help them—there is that what I'm going to tell you now I wouldn't breathe to a livin' soul, and you mustn't give me away to those divils in the village. One of the taxes we feel the most is that one we pay to the

shopkeeper. But, sure, he's a fine Home Ruler, and we all want the credit he gives us, so d'ye think we ever say a word agin him?"

"But, surely," I said, "you do not pay taxes to the shopkeeper? He has no right to tax you."

"Indade, your riverence, it's to that thief of a shopkeeper we pay a big lump of all we earn, and, I'm thinkin', the Saxon Government has given him the right to bleed us in a way we don't understand at all, at all. Now, there's one of the reasons why I'm a Home Ruler. Y' see, it's done like this. While our crops are comin' up, and while the cows and the pigs are gettin' fat, we never have enough in the house to buy what we eat and drink and pay the money down. So off we go to the shopkeeper, and beg the gentleman for the love of God to let us have credit. Well, as soon as a man has got into them books the shopkeeper has on the top of his desk, to tell the Lord's truth, he's done for. An' afther that, he's got to buy everything from that dealer, and he mustn't grumble at the prices. Now, when I've been in Dublin, no less, I've just compared the prices in the stores there with the prices we have to pay in Hoolihan's shop here, and it's surprised you'd be at the difference. Begor, I'm thinkin' we pay double the value in the shops hereabout. Now, your riverence, if you'll plaze to be consitherin' that most of our earnings are paid to the shopkeeper, you'll understand how we're taxed by the shopkeeper for all so poor as we are. What would you yourself, or what would the landlord say, I'd like to know, if he had to pay a quarter of his income as long as he lives, just to get their bit to eat and the rest of it on credit for once?"



"But everybody who gets into debt gets into trouble ; that's well known," I remarked. "You can't call that being taxed. If you paid cash, you would be rid of the tax to the shopkeeper."

"An' where in the world are we to get the money from to pay cash ? Indade, there doesn't seem to be a penny in the country. Father O'Flanagan says to me once that, if everything was paid for in cash in the country, it's ten times as much we'd require, says he, as there is now. I tell you what it is—the rich people can borrow as much as they like, with no difficulty in life, and cheap at that ; but we can't. 'Tis the truth I'm tellin' ye, an' no lie. It's meself that's wishin' it was the other way about, for then the landlords wouldn't be borrowin' so much money, and spend it in London, and then squeeze us to pay for their illegant appairance."

"Well, Mr. O'Flinn, what is your remedy against the tax of the shopkeeper ?"

"Home Rule, your riverence ; Home Rule. God be praised !"

"Home Rule !" I said. "How can Home Rule prevent your indebtedness to the shopkeeper ?" I asked.

"Sure, yer riverence, when we get Home Rule," said Pat, confidently, "the Irish Parliament 'll sell us all we want at cost price, and give every tenant a dacent amount of credit. Faith, a blind man can see what a mighty big difference it'll make to us."

"I think I see great difficulties in the way," I said, "of such liberality on the part of Parliament. But is the shopkeeper's tax the only evil from which you expect Home Rule to save you ?"

"It is not, your riverence, an' that's the truth. Over

and beyant that, it's goin' to save us from the agent, the man who comes round to buy our bacon, and butter, and eggs, or anything we've got to sell. It's near as much *he* gets from us as the shopkeeper."

"How is that?" I asked.

"See here, now," said Pat, incisively, illustrating his meaning by manipulating the fingers on his left hand ; "this man here is the man who buys from us. He's no more than a kind of an agent, and he sells to a bigger man in the district. This man here sells in Dublin, or some other big town. Then the Dublin man sends the stuff to a factor in London, the factor sells to the wholesale man, the wholesale man sells to the shopkeeper, and the shopkeeper sells to those who eat the stuff. So that makes six people who have to get a living, or to make a profit, out of our stuff, and after that there is not much left for us. God knows that prices are low enough ; and yet, out of these, we have to pay taxes to six people, and I'm blest if I know to how many agents. You call that excessive taxation—it's the word, I'm thinking—don't ye ? and do ye think that the English would be better off than we are if they were taxed like that, an' all ?"

I thought he had made out a strong case, and rose to leave him, when he laid hold of my coat-button and pulled me down on my chair, saying in a hushed voice : "I haven't told ye about the worst tax of all yet—the tax we have to pay to the Gombeen man. It's not you that don't know we all have to borrow sometimes. Most of us can make more out of our holdings with a little money than without it. There's divil a soul to borrow from except the Gombeen man ; and

Father O'Flanagan says the reason of this is that the banks suck up all the money and send it to London. It's the Gombeen men and nobody else who make powerful charges for the little they lend. Sixty per cent., no less, is what they promise to be satisfied with ; and this, 'tis your riverence knows, is a murtherin' tax on a poor strugglin' tenant. But before you've done with them you often have to pay many hundreds per cent., an' any man in the village will tell ye the same. Sure, an' it's meself can tell you that the Widow Rafferty wanted to buy a cow, and what with trouble and heart-scald she borrowed enough money to do it. She could have paid the sixty per cent. interest, and yet made a little out of the cow, for all so poor as she was ; but the Gombeen man so managed the business that the widow woman has now paid the value of the cow three times over, and still owes him the full value of the cow and ten pounds besides. I'm thinkin' to ask you what's your opinion of such taxation? Most of us have to pay it, and do you know what happens when a shopkeeper, or Gombeen man, retires from business to live on his capital? They say they sell their business ; but what does the new man buy? Faith ! it's us he buys. We have to work for him, and starve for him. I hear them talk about slavery. But if we were slaves we should be worth something to our masters, and would be cared for ; but the Saxon system consists in squeezing the last penny and the last bit of work out of us, and casting us, old before our time and broken in body and mind, as so much rubbish into the workhouse. Now, your riverence, can you wonder it's Home Rulers we are? Wouldn't you be

anything at all to escape from the unmerciful screw of the Saxons?"

"I wish I could see how Home Rule would help you against your oppressors," I said, "but I may tell you that I am rather surprised that, among your tax-extortionists, you have not mentioned the landlord, who generally figures prominently as a cause of Ireland's poverty."

"I'll tell you why, your riverence. If I had been speaking at a meeting, instead of talking secret like here with you, it's most like that I'd have spoken only of the landlord; for it would never do for us to have a row with the others. Besides, they're all Home Rulers, every mother's son o' them, and help us to squeeze the landlords, and, what's more, through them, the English House of Lords."

With that Pat stood up, shook me by the hand, and left the inn muttering, "Over-taxed, is it? Tear an' ages, I should think we are."

Pat having kept me much longer than I expected, and wanting to catch Lord ——, an influential landlord, before he left the smoking-room of the Kildare Street Club in Dublin, I availed myself of that prompt form of locomotion which is the privilege of spirits, and in a few minutes I was seated opposite his lordship. He was reading from a newspaper an account of an Irish meeting in America, where he had been hailed as the new uncrowned King of Ireland, the leader of an Irish army to be formed, and to be swelled by a million of well-armed Irishmen from the United States. The speakers at that meeting had declared that in Lord —— Ireland had at last found its avenger and England its humiliator.

His lordship looked both bored and annoyed, and exclaimed, as he flung the paper on the floor: "What absolute nonsense! Is it possible that rational human beings can believe such trash? This will hamper me terribly. If the Cabinet had got up these meetings, they could not have been more to its purpose."

"But in what position do you stand to the House of Lords in this Financial Question?" I asked, after his having been hypnotised by a few passes.

"That is not the question," he said confidently. "The question is: How does the House of Lords stand towards me? We have all the trump cards, and, if they don't give relief to Ireland, the whole world will believe that their policy has always been to treat Ireland unfairly and cruelly. If they don't listen to us, they alone will be responsible for the menacing form and dimensions the Home Rule agitation will assume."

"But don't you think," I asked, "that you are playing a dangerous game? Might not the Government resign, instead of yielding? Would not the accession to power of the Liberal Party spell ruin to both Irish and English landlords? And might not you be blamed for turning against your friends at a very awkward moment?"

"One question at a time," was the impatient reply. "Hundreds of questions may be asked, and a thousand causes for hesitation may be given. The whole Empire suffers from the scepticism, indifferentism, and the endless casuistry of our leading men. The weak and decadent spirit of our time has long enough left the field open for any energetic man to take the Empire into his hands, be it for purposes noble or ignoble. What we want is not more casuistry and sophistry; we want action."

And, if those who have a stake in the Empire won't act, the Man in the Street may. I am not animated by any ridiculous ambition. But I am an Irishman first, and a landlord afterwards. Though things in other parts of the Empire may be worse than, or as bad as, in Ireland, duty—like charity—begins at home; and I cannot stand by and see my country ruined, and my nation first impoverished and then insulted. Danger, indeed! The danger is in the neglecting of festering wounds—in the ostrich-like hiding of your head in face of danger. Ireland groans under State-produced poverty, and if now, when a concrete piece of injustice has been pointed out, nothing is done to redress it, disaffection in Ireland will be strong enough to aggravate every threatening danger to the Empire, and to foster new ones."

"But the Government may not yield," I said.

"Ha, ha! You amuse me. Has this Conservative Government ever hesitated to yield? Have they not yielded all along the line—not to the pillars of our Empire and of our Liberty, but to the motley herd of Socialists and Collectivists, vying with each other in the destruction of both? You may be sure that, if it comes to resigning or to yielding, the Government won't hesitate long. But, let them resign or not resign, there will never be an accession of the Liberal Party to power. A process of total disintegration of that body is going on rapidly, and the cohesion between its terribly heterogeneous parts is already so small that all its best elements would support any patriotic Government free from the worst stigma of Toryism. As to turning against my friends, I do nothing of the sort. My first friends are the Irish



people, and, as to my friends in the Government, I am trying to save them from ruin."

"Supposing the Government were willing to yield," I said ; "what would you expect them to do?"

"I expect them to reduce the taxation in Ireland."

"Yes, I understand that," said I ; "but can it be done without making Ireland a 'separate entity'—to use the diplomatic phrase of the Royal Commission—which, in definite language, would mean a separate State?"

"Most decidedly can it be done. There is an immense difference between a political separation and fiscal autonomy. We have many examples to prove that. The city of Hamburg had fiscal autonomy for many years after its annexation to the German Empire. The present free port in Hamburg, as well as that in Copenhagen, is not excluded from the German or the Danish States. The Channel Islands have absolutely no Import Duties, and yet they form an integral part of the United Kingdom as much as Ireland."

"But would not fiscal autonomy—as you call it—lead to complete political separation?" I asked.

"How can there be separation, unless somebody severs?" exclaimed his lordship with vivacity. "Who wants separation in Ireland? Certainly no Irishman who has any respect for the true interests of his country. Ireland has acquired a full and legitimate share in the Empire. By separation she would lose that share. Its value must not be calculated on its present yield. A time will come when a better system of government will show the British and Irish what immense resources they possess in the Empire."

"Perhaps you are right," I remarked ; "but if you don't bring about Separation, you may bring about Home Rule."

"I might find the Philosopher's Stone," said his lordship, satirically. "The one is as much connected with reality as the other. Home Rule is a ghost that cannot frighten me. It thrives only in the dark, and vanishes in the same proportion as light is thrown upon it. If Home Rule is brought to the front again, I shall simply call the attention of the House of Lords, as well as of the Home Rulers, to the undeniable fact that there are only three ways in which the relations between Ireland and England can be maintained : firstly, full partnership, as at present ; secondly, supremacy of Ireland over Great Britain ; and, thirdly, supremacy of Great Britain over Ireland. One of these ways must be determined upon before any details can be discussed, if we are to behave as rational beings."

"The taxes which press most heavily upon the Irish masses are indirect taxes ; and, by reducing these or abolishing them altogether, import from Ireland would have to be treated in Great Britain as import from abroad, involving much Custom House work and much delay," was my next suggestion.

"There would certainly be some inconvenience," said his lordship ; "but please notice that I have only pointed out the possibility of fiscal autonomy. The question is a wide one, and naturally falls into two parts—first, the reduction of taxes in Ireland ; and, second, the removal of the chief causes of poverty in Ireland. I would not have recourse to the first alterna-



tive until the second had been found impossible after complete investigation."

"And yet your platform-cry is reduction of taxation?"

"Yes; why not? Any stick is good enough to beat a dog with. A good case has been made out with regard to taxation, and round this question the friends of Ireland have a better chance to rally than any other."

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V.

THE MARTYRED LANDLORD.

THE Irish peer having told me all I wanted from him, I brought him back to consciousness, but took care to vanish before he was wide awake. I was now bound for Belfast; but on the way I heard some snatches of conversation on the subject of Irish Finance. The words emanated from a fine-looking country house, in the library of which an Irish landlord discussed the question with a French friend, who spoke English fluently. I quietly installed myself at a small side table and took out my note-book.

"We rejoice in France," said the Frenchman, "that there is at last a chance of having justice done to

Ireland, and I am proud that you, my friend, in this question stand by your countrymen."

"I hope I always do," said the landlord, "when they are reasonable. But what do you mean by doing justice to Ireland?"

"I mean," was the reply, "that the oppression and the extortions may now, if not cease, become less crushing."

"Oppression and extortion!" said the landlord, evidently amazed. "You must not go by the absurd accounts contained in the French Press about the relations between Great Britain and Ireland. According to these, England is supposed to have drawn part of her huge wealth out of Ireland, and is still trading on the misery of the Irish, and grinding them down in a manner which can result only in the extinction of the population."

"Yes, I know," said the Frenchman, "that our Press is given to exaggeration; but cannot many historical facts be quoted in support of their opinions? The population of Ireland has decreased enormously, while that of England has doubled. Poverty increases in Ireland, while the wealth of England goes on increasing rapidly. Ireland has not sufficient railways, not sufficient ports; and several Liberal measures, adopted in England, have not been extended to Ireland. Could such be the circumstances if Great Britain was not bent on keeping Ireland down?"

"My dear sir," exclaimed the landlord, rather energetically, "you are entirely mistaken. There was a time when the British Government, mistaking its own interests, subjected Ireland to a step-motherly

treatment. But for the last forty years, at least, the British Parliament has been animated by the most laudable desire to benefit Ireland ; and, if it has not succeeded, the fault must either lie with the Irish people, or with a want of knowledge on the part of Parliament. Look at the facts as they are. Every Irishman has the same rights and liberties as any other citizens of the kingdom. Ireland is considerably over-represented in Parliament, and, therefore, each Irishman exercises a greater influence over the affairs of the Empire than any average Englishman. The exceptional coercive legislation is only resorted to to stop murder, intimidation, and cattle maiming. Irish farmers have the benefit of forcibly reduced rents, of Land Courts, and have been admitted to what amounts to part-ownership in the land. The rents in Ireland are lower than in Scotland, even in cases where the soil is much better. How, under such circumstances, can you call the Irish—especially the tenants—an oppressed race ? There is only one oppressed class in Ireland, and that is the landlords ; but we don't get the sympathy of anybody."

"Well," said the Frenchman, "the opinion is current that you landlords are the oppressors."

"I know that is so," was the reply, "and yet we only ask that contracts should be respected. It is to our interests and to the interests of Ireland that the most able farmers should get the farms ; and as the test of the results a man expects from his farm is the rent he offers to pay, our duty to Ireland at large, to the farmers, and to ourselves, is to let the farms to the highest bidders. And we are not harsh. It is

a very common thing in Ireland for the tenant to become a year or more behind with his rent, without being threatened with eviction ; while the poor working men in England are generally evicted from their cottages if they happen to be a couple of weeks in arrear, in spite of the fact that their cottages—unlike the Irish farms—only serve them as domiciles, and bring in nothing.”

“But,” remarked the Frenchman, “how do you explain the bad reputation the Irish landlords have gained? How about absentees, rack-renting, etc.?”

“The best theory I have heard on the subject is that Ireland is passing through a transitory period, involving the gradual supercession of the feudal system by the commercial system. We landlords, obliged to follow with the times, have had no option than to accept the commercial, though the feudal system would have infinitely more attraction for us. On the other hand, the tenants still live under the ideas of the feudal system—that is to say, they look upon the landlord, not as a business man, who should be dealt with only under a well-considered contract, bound to be honourably kept when once signed ; but they look upon him as a man whose economic and social position ought to render him their tender parent or a benevolent Providence. It is the Radicals in England who have accelerated the advent of the commercial system and the suppression of all feudal remnants, good, bad, and indifferent. They have made a great mistake in not securing for the poor people the real advantages of the commercial system before they abolished those derived from the feudal system. The complaint about the absentee landlords

must fall to the ground before recent economic truths. The Irish, like most other people, believe that money spent outside Ireland reduces the stock of money in this country, and thus hampers business. But, if it is a fact that each country and each locality has, under any circumstances, as much money as it can hold, the chief complaint about absentee landlords rests on a fallacy. As to rack-renting, it is a thing of the past. You cannot call tenants rack-rented when Land Courts fix lower rents for them than offered in the open market."

"But, Monsieur," exclaimed the Frenchman, exasperatedly, raising his shoulders and spreading out his hands; "Ireland is poor and oppressed, but if the landlords and the Parliament are not the oppressors and the bloodsuckers, who are?"

"There are plenty of them," was the reply; "quite enough to prevent even a very moderate state of prosperity: the shopkeeper, the Gombeen man, the middle man, the usurer, the agitator, and the priest. All these people treat the Irish peasant without the slightest heed for the fable about the goose with the golden eggs."

"I am, as most modern Frenchmen are," said the foreign gentleman, "entirely opposed to clerical domination; but I am sorry to hear you count the Irish Church among Ireland's enemies. I know Protestants are apt to point to the fact that, in the countries where the Roman Catholic clergy hold an influential position, there poverty and squalor prevail. But I think this is putting the cart before the horse, as you English call it. The Catholic religion being the most charity-enforcing of all religions, it is popular in poor countries. Besides, the southern nations are naturally less energetic than

the northern, while at the same time their imagination is far more vivid, and consequently more receptive; hence we find Roman Catholicism and poverty going together. I have seen much of Irish priests, and feel sure you do them a gross injustice in quoting their religion as one of the causes of Irish poverty."

"You have not understood me at all," replied the landlord. "I said nothing against the Roman Catholic religion, nor anything against the Church of Rome, which, however, is a very different thing. Though I am a Protestant, I pride myself in having no prejudices against the Irish Catholic clergy. Some of the best men I have known have been Irish priests. There are Protestants who would complain about the Peter's pence and money collected from poor people for masses and other purposes; but I, for my part, do not believe that the amount thus sent out of the country is sufficiently large to add perceptibly to the existing poverty. What I complain of is that a great number of the Irish priests—not as priests, but as politicians—make a bad use of the great influence they possess. They form rash opinions on political, sociological, and economic questions, which they have not studied, and which, without study, they could not possibly understand. Instead of turning against the leeches that ruin the country, instead of assisting the peasants to shake off the money-lender, the middleman, and shopkeeper; instead of showing that honesty in business and conscientious fulfilment of contract is the only possible basis for prosperity; instead of doing these things, they turn against the landlords, the very men who are more than anyone else interested in the prosperity of the country. They have taken for



granted that private ownership of land, or, as they call it, landlordism, is incompatible with the prosperity of the people, and that some kind of State ownership of land, the chief plank in the Home Rule platform, is preferable. Of course this old fallacy has been exploded long ago, but our agitating priests do not take this into consideration. They keep favouring a bureaucratic management of the land, though it is proved that such a system would be the worst imaginable one for the farmer, and still more for the labourers both in the towns and the country. The priests' sins of commission are great, and will harm Ireland and the Catholic Church enormously; but their sins of omission are greater still; for, if they led the people in the right direction, my belief is that Ireland would become England's garden, populated by a happy and prosperous population."

"I now understand your meaning better," said the Frenchman musingly; "you wish the priest to understand that the Irish question is not a political one, but an economic one. My dear sir, if we Frenchmen could bring our politicians to take the same view of French questions, we should be a happy nation. You expect too much of human beings. Every one naturally recommends the medium he can supply, and priests, like other people, do not do and say what they believe right, but they believe that to be right which they do and say. But will you explain to me how the agitators cause poverty in Ireland? In France we believe that human progress is largely due to agitators."

"So it is, no doubt, all the world over," said the landlord; "but when agitators agitate for retrogression the case is often reversed. I am not pedantic enough to



demand that each agitator against bad government should be ready to supply a complete scheme for a better government. But he ought not to confine his activity to the promotion of a distinctly bad scheme. The Home Rule agitation took its origin with the retrogressive movement in England towards the old fallacious Collectivist principles, and all the measures the Home Rulers now find blocked by Parliament are Socialistic measures. What they should agitate for is genuine, natural prosperity for Ireland. As it is, they inflict immense injury upon the poverty-stricken classes of Ireland by removing the basis on which genuine prosperity can be constructed. I mean, of course, respect for property, contracts, and personal liberty. What Ireland wants is more private capital for the development of its resources, and more able men to stimulate production and increase the demand for workers. But the chief result of the Home Rule agitation so far has been to expel these factors of prosperity from Ireland. The Home Rulers, like the priests, turn against us, and we are in every way made the scapegoats."

"But does not the Conservative Government stand up for you landlords?" asked the Frenchman.

"We stand up for the Conservative Government ; but what do we gain by it? Most of us have lost about two-thirds of the value of our property, in order to supply sops to the Socialistic Cerberus. The excessive taxation of the country finally falls upon us, and, when Local Government has been fully extended to Ireland, the heavy local rates will also fall upon us. In spite of all this, we are treated by the English Government, not as self-sacrificing friends, but as a conquered race. Our

interest is often sacrificed for that of the officials."

"I don't quite understand," said the Frenchman.

"An example from my own experience," said the landlord, "will show you what I mean. My brother came into this estate in 1871, and paid his Succession Duty in full. My mother had a jointure, by my father's will, of £500 a-year out of this estate. She died a couple of years after he had paid his Succession Duty, and my brother died in 1879. I then came into the estate, and paid my Succession Duty and interest, and got a clear receipt for all duty and interest on my estate. I was not aware of the jointure till the other day, when title to my estate was being made out by my Dublin solicitor. The Inland Revenue Office of Dublin then said that no Succession Duty had been paid on this £500; and that now duty and interest, mind you, for all these years, must be paid forthwith. It was, of course, the duty of the officials to collect the Succession Duty at my mother's death, and there is no proof that it was not paid. If it was not, it is the fault of some official, and not mine. To claim from me now this Succession Duty, *plus* twenty years' accumulated interest, is the height of injustice. Not knowing anything about such a liability, I might, during these twenty years, have disposed of a considerable part of my property in settlements on relations, in contributions, in heavy personal expenses, in risky and unsuccessful investments, in abatement of rents, etc. I might, indeed, have left myself little more than a bare living, and, under such circumstances, the present claim of the Inland Revenue Office would have ruined me, in order to make up for neglect of duty on the part of an official."

"You don't mean to say," said the Frenchman, evidently amazed, "that the laws and the Government of the country would permit such a glaring injustice? We Frenchmen, alas, are a bureaucracy-ridden nation; but any such blackmailing would be impossible. The responsible official would have to pay for his blunder, or, what is more likely, his friends in power would condone it. But have you no redress?"

"I might go to law, and have trouble and worry for a great many years, to say nothing of expenses that might lose me more than the amount involved; and, after all, lose the case as well on some legal technicality."

"From what you have said," replied the Frenchman, "you will throw in your lot with those who object to over-taxation in Ireland?"

"Of course I shall, and I shall be extremely glad if this question furnishes the rallying-point that we Irish landlords badly want."

The landlord spoke excitedly, got up from his seat, and began to walk up and down the room.

"We ought to have realized long ago," he said, "that the only way of obtaining any sympathy from any British Government was by attacking and reviling them. The loyal and the self-sacrificing are rewarded with contempt, while the impudent opponents are admitted into the charmed circle. It's time that we landlords—the backbone of the Irish nation—should assume political independence, and threaten to wreck our Governments at every turn. We have been leaning on reeds, not men. Our politicians are becoming invaded by American corruption, and in order to stick to power they are ready to betray all those who trusted

them. Even Conservatives, landlords, and capitalists knuckle under to Socialists, and themselves bring in Socialistic measures. Some want popularity, some large salaries, and others social distinction; and, to gain their object, they forget party, country, and Empire."

"Come, come, my friend," said the Frenchman; "your excitement makes you unjust," as he rose and touched the landlord on the shoulder. "Let me remind you of one important fact. Look wherever you will throughout the civilized world, and nowhere will you find a Cabinet consisting of more honest and patriotic men than the Cabinet of St. James's. If this is the way you criticise your public men, what ought other nations to do? I am afraid that you and your friends commit the very vulgar error of regarding Government as a supernatural agency, infallible and omnipotent. Remember they are only men, after all, and try and place yourself in their position. They must respect public opinion, and, though of course their personal weaknesses and idiosyncrasies may lead them into many errors, I firmly believe that, in their own consciences, they acquit themselves of the contemptible Opportunism of which you accuse them."

Leading the excited landlord back to the table, and forcing him to take his seat, the Frenchman sat down opposite to him, and continued:—

"Let us look at the question from an objective point of view. Let us forget that you are an Irish landlord, that you are a victim, and let us see whether you Irish landlords, as a class, have done what you ought to have done for yourselves, your family, and your country. You have been loyal to the Conservative Government,

that is true; but, my dear sir, we don't live in times when loyalty, *per se*, is a virtue. Now-a-days, all depends on to whom, and to what, you are loyal. You must confess that it is only a few weeks ago that you have become aware of a fact which is as old as our race—I mean the solidarity, the interdependence, between every inhabitant of a country. Is it not fair to ask why you Irish landlords have not long ago joined hands in the noble work of rescuing your nation from poverty and all the evils that fall in its wake? I know you will plead ignorance regarding the causes for, and the remedy against, the poverty-stricken condition of your people, and that you will shift the responsibility on to the shoulders of the Government. But if you who live in Ireland and have all your interests here do not know, how can you expect the Government to know? Might not a very different result have been achieved if you had devoted a very small percentage of the losses you have sustained to inquiries and experiment. Take, for example, the chief cause of Ireland's poverty—the usury system. In your country it is appalling. In France it exists to some extent, but its influence on the small farmers is comparatively slight. They thrive and they save. In Germany and Italy, and Hungary, the usury system was almost as bad as in Ireland, but of late years it has received an important check, and is diminishing. You have, then, here the means of arriving at the truth. Any inquiry on the part of you landlords into the usury system of different countries would surely show you how to deal with your own. Have you not been guilty of that weakness which you always find in the Man in the Street—to take the advice of the successful politician,

regardless of the causes to which his success is due, rather than that of the thinker and the specialist? Have you consulted the economists? If you distrust the somewhat Socialistic economists of the British Universities, have you not in France such men as my friends M. Yves Guyot and M. Leroy-Beaulieu, and in Italy Professor Fiamingo—men who are too clear-minded to be infected with any taint of Socialism, Have you supported and co-operated with institutions and associations which in England spend their time and their money, and risk their popularity, in fighting your cause—that is, the cause of the people at large—against the politician and the bureaucrat? Confess, my friend, that nothing of all this has been done, and that you are wrong in leaving the Government to fight alone.”

It was some time before the landlord replied. He seemed deep in thought—thought that powerfully agitated his mind.

“I never thought of that before,” he said. “I begin to think you are right. I wish you had told me this fifteen years ago. Now that you have led my mind in that direction, a thousand things appear to have been neglected by us. I wonder if it is too late to change our tactics now.”

“Much can be done yet,” said the Frenchman. “All you have to do is to induce all Irish landowners, and as many other Irishmen as possible, to act together independently of party prejudices and party chicaneries. But there is one misconception you must get over: the too common idea with the English—especially the Conservatives—that the Irish are an inferior race. Give them a fair chance, and you will find that they will



accomplish in their own country as many great things as many of them have done abroad."

While the Frenchman still spoke, a roar was heard through the corridors of the house.

"The dinner-gong," said the landlord. "Let us go and drink to the prosperity of Ireland."

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## VI.

### THE GENTLE ART OF MAKING LOYALISTS.

I LEFT the building as unperceived as I entered it. It was now quite dark, and as I looked about on the chance of lighting upon any other source of information before leaving the neighbourhood I noticed on the other side of the village some large-sized windows, through which streamed out the light of a couple of lamps as well as that of a good fire. I approached one of the windows, and found a large room occupied by four men in the uniform of our Irish police. I was peering into the guard-room of the police-station. Anxious to have a talk with one or more of the strapping fellows within, I entered the room. The atmosphere was very close, and not a little vitiated. The smell of stale tobacco predominated. In the corner, on a wooden bench, reclined a constable fast asleep. His belt was off and his tunic open, and his ruddy face, with its happy and



contented expression, reminded me of one of Lerche's sleeping monks. Two other men of the same corps were playing cards in another corner at a small deal table against the wall opposite the door. In front of the fire a man was seated in a wooden arm-chair who appeared to be older than the three others, and superior to them in rank. His hair was dark, and, by dint of cosmetics, kept in those graceful bends over his forehead so dear to the sons of Mars. His moustache was short, strongly waxed, and coquettishly pointed upwards. His face was red, and his small eyes were half closed while he leisurely read a copy of *Tit-Bits*, and smoked some rank tobacco in a long churchwarden. This middle-aged Adonis was decidedly my man. I suddenly stood in front of him, and held up my Truth-mirror to his face.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me who you are?" I said.

"Sure, and your ladyship can't be from this part of the country, for there's moighty few of the sex that don't know Sergeant Murphy," he said, as he laid down his pipe and twirled his moustache.

"You have, then, been long in the place, I suppose?"

"Bless your kind heart, it's twelve years that I've been doing dewty here."

"And how many men are you in all at the station?" I asked.

"We are just five in all. We four here that are off dewty for the moment, and O'Flaherty who is on dewty now."

"Were you always as many as that?"

"No, it was alone that I was for five lonely years, and then I gradually got more men to help until we were five."

"What was the reason that the force was increased? Were you not yourself able to do the work, and cope with the law-breakers?"

"I must explain to your ladyship," said he, rather indignantly, "that the Royal Irish Constabulary are no menials, and are not maintained to do work. We look upon ourselves as gentlemen ready to fight for their Queen and their country. That's our duty—not work."

"Has, then, O'Flaherty gone out to fight," I could not help saying, "as he is out on duty?"

"Bless you, he's not fighting. There's no fighting now, but his duty is to increase the loyalty of the people, and to inspire respect for law and order wherever he goes," said the sergeant.

"I understand," I said; "and during the first five years you alone were not able to inspire respect for the authorities, or to prevent the breaking of the law; and so reinforcements were gradually sent to you?"

"It's entirely mistaken you are, my lady. Sergeant Murphy always succeeds in what he undertakes, and, so strong was my influence in this district that not an arrest was made during the time. Sure, I flatter myself that I've made the people here loyal."

"But how was it that more men were sent up here when you alone sufficed?"

"Well, the Castle didn't exactly act on my advice," said the sergeant, his face beaming with self-satisfaction; "but there was no denying it, that if one man could produce loyalty, it's certain five men could produce more; and of that article the Government can't have enough. And then, you see, it's very lonely for one man

in these stations ; and it would not do to familiarize one's self with those one has to look after. Besides, the men-folk about here don't seem anxious for our company—their loyalty doesn't take that shape. Jealousy !" he added, with a sly side-glance and another twirl of his moustache ; "I must confess to it ; I did encourage the increase of the force here, and so I got these four men to help me."

"To help you to what ?" I said.

"Well, to do nothing in particular—to make the station just a bit livelier, and to be prepared for the worst."

"Have you in the district people whom you suspect of conspiring against law and order, and who would become dangerous if no police force were present ?"

"It's not that, my lady. I don't know a single one of these dangerous characters that you are after reading about in the papers. But then, you know, I've always done my best ; and if I was to leave I don't know what would be happening."

"You have noticed, I suppose, different degrees of loyalty among the people of the district ?" was my next question.

"Certainly I have," was his reply. "The men-folk are, as a rule, not so loyal as the women, and the little boys are the most unloyal of all. Of all the women, the servant girls—bless their pretty faces !—are the most loyal. Sure, your ladyship, they're more than loyal, they're just devoted to us. If we could succeed with the rest of the population as we do with the servant girls, there'd be no Irish Question."

"And how do you spend your time here ?" I asked.

"One or two of us are generally on duty, and the others then take it easy. We smoke, we improve our minds, and sometimes have a game of cards. Sometimes we play among ourselves, and sometimes one or two of us have the honour of a game with the magistrate."

"And what do you think would happen," I asked, "if the four men were withdrawn and you were again left alone?"

"Nothing particular, I think, would happen, except that Sergeant Murphy might send in his resignation; for the place would be too dull for anything. I could obtain a good berth as the husband of the Widow Molloy, who keeps the Pig and Whistle in the next village. Now, I don't fancy that that would be after the liking of the Castle, for the Widow Molloy is a turbulent Home Ruler by nature. If I leave the force and this uniform and marry the Widow Molloy, I may not be able to inspire the same loyalty in her as before."

As the sergeant was getting decidedly prosy, I wished him all happiness with the widow, replaced *Tit-Bits* in his hands, and took myself off; not, however, before noticing two figures in the bright moonlight further down the road—a tall man, slightly bending over a female figure, whose waist he encircled with his arm, and whose head rested on his shoulder: it was Private O'Flaherty, of the Royal Irish Constabulary, doing his duty.

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## VII.

## A PILLAR OF IRISH INDUSTRY.

IT was well past dinner time when I reached Belfast. The man I was in search of had dined with his family and a few guests, and the whole party was having coffee and cigarettes in a cozy sitting room. It suited my purpose to conceal my spiritual nature, and I allowed myself to be announced under the name of a well-known American lady who has frequently interviewed prominent Englishmen for the American Press. After being detained for a few minutes in an ante-room, I was invited to join the party. I was received with that hearty hospitality which, from times immemorial, has been practised in the Emerald Isle without regard to the wealth or rank of the guests.

"You come, I suppose," said the master of the house, as he rose and extended his hand to me, "to torment me about Irish Finance?"

"Well," I said, "rather to relieve you, in case you have anything on your mind regarding Irish Finance which you wish to get rid of."

"I have, indeed," he said, as he advanced a low easy chair. "Please be seated, if you have no objection to the presence of these two ladies, my wife and my daughters, and of my friends, Mr. Y. and Mr. X., during the interview."

"Not the slightest," I replied; "they will be so many

witnesses that I put down your words correctly. Perhaps you will first oblige me by telling me whether you consider yourself an Irishman ?”

“Indeed, I do,” he said ; “I was born in Belfast. I have spent most of my time, made my money here, and all my interests are connected with the place. I daresay that my ancestors had been as long in Ireland as those of any American have been in America.”

“And do you consider yourself overtaxed ?” was my next question.

“I don’t consider myself overtaxed as far as those taxes are concerned which I pay to the tax-collectors, or, indirectly, to the Inland Revenue Office. But there can be little doubt that I suffer, as all Irishmen do, from the over-taxation of the Irish people in general. When a people staggers under too heavy taxes, they not only lose the wealth which the Government take possession of, and the enormous amount of wealth which is wasted in collecting expenses—they lose a great deal more. Their consuming-power becomes less ; the business of every man diminishes ; the production, capital, and wage-fund are diminished ; poverty, insolvency, indebtedness are increased ; enterprise, thrift, and invention are discouraged ; and a reckless, devil-me-care spirit takes possession of the people. I do not complain about my own business ; but, if I were living among a nation permitted to be as prosperous as natural circumstances would permit, I should be making twice the profit I make now. Besides, I should have the great satisfaction of being able to pay my workpeople better wages, and to see more happiness around me.”

“I hope you won’t think the question impertinent,” I



said, "if I ask you what prevents you from giving your workpeople higher wages out of the present good profits you have alluded to?"

"The question is quite legitimate," he said, smiling. "You may be one of those who frequently hear excellent, but somewhat narrow-minded, preachers in our churches persistently decry all business men, and especially employers of labour, for avowedly and openly aiming at profits, interest, cheap labour, and 'filthy lucre' in other forms, instead of giving all our profits to those who work for them—instead of working their wage-sheets on Mr. Ruskin's principle. I have often thought what a pity it is that these preachers will not take the trouble to inquire a little more closely into business principles. If they did, they would find that all the wholesale business of Great Britain is not only carried on perfectly honestly, but that its working mechanism is based on integrity. Every business man knows to a nicety what profits are honest, and what profits are dishonest, and the more the latter are tempting and safe, the more are they avoided. It has often struck me that clergymen and other professional people who are apt to cry us business men down have no idea of the strict business honesty which renders modern business possible. But I have to ask your pardon for digressing from our subject. There are two classes of reasons why wages should be paid at market-value, or thereabouts. I may call them the employers' reasons and the workmen's reasons. An employer must make exact calculations in order to undertake large orders; he must make sure that his profits will cover possible miscalculations, fluctuations in the markets of his raw



materials, the interest on the capital he employs, the wear and tear of buildings and machinery, the risks of fire, explosions, and other accidents, the wear and tear of his own and his clerks' ability. To cover all this considerable profits are required, and, when competition is keen, we run many risks, and actually make money by luck. But then we have other reasons for making profits. It is our duty to our country and to humanity at large to try to extend our business, so that we can produce more and better goods, and employ more and more workers at higher and higher wages. For this it is necessary for us to increase our capital. Then there are our families to provide for. We all wish to live again in our sons, and to them we look for the realization of plans which the shortness of life compels us to leave half finished or only begun. The large sum we have invested in works and machinery cannot be looked upon as a property for our families, because its value is dependent on the state of trade, on political events, and Government."

"On Government!" I could not help exclaiming. "The Government's object surely is to protect property—especially productive property, on which trade and wages depend?"

"I am glad to hear that such ideas are still prevalent among you Americans," said the Belfast capitalist. "With us the idea of property is becoming very hazy. All our politicians are attacking it, forgetting the wise warning of Lord Salisbury that existing capital is too small, and is too rapidly consumed, to be of any account; and that the future happiness of the people depends on what we can produce. Our legislators can

utterly destroy invested capital, and have often done so. Look at the Irish landlords, for example. No! we must accumulate capital outside business in order to provide for our families."

"I hope you have no fear," I said, "of Socialism, or some such political change, depriving you of your capital?"

"Nothing is more probable," was his reply. "As to Socialism, I don't think there could be such a thing; but Socialistic attacks on capital will certainly either destroy it, or drive it out of the country, and then—chaos!"

"And do you think," I asked, "that the present amount of taxation in Ireland is detrimental to the formation of capital?"

"Certainly I do. Our people have nothing like the chances of accumulating such as the French have. In France the taxes are very heavy, but the prosperity of the masses has, during the last century at least, been ahead of the taxes; and the taxes, therefore, have diminished the prosperity, but do not prevent it. In Ireland it is different. Here the taxes have always been ahead of the prosperity, and they do not skim off the profit, but drain off the capital from which the profits should spring."

"But, surely, you must acknowledge," I could not resist saying, "that there is a vast difference between the thrift of the two nations?"

"The fundamental difference is not so great as you imagine," he said, musingly. "The same force, applied under different circumstances, will produce different effects. There is in both nations a strong and legitimate

desire to apply, as far as possible, the result of their labour to their own advantage. Under the French system, the people achieve that end by adding to their capital ; the poor Irish achieve it by spending their profit on themselves before the Gombeen man, the shopkeeper, the land agent, and other chronic creditors, have time to lay hands on it."

"Well, I see your meaning, though it sounds paradoxical to say that an Irishman's thrift consists in spending all his earnings; but you have not explained to me the working-man's reasons for preferring market-price wages. I was always under the impression that labourers would go for the highest wages they could obtain under any circumstances."

"You may be right," he said, "if you refer to individual cases. Each labourer will bargain for the highest wages he can get ; but this may be called taking advantage of his market. But if you study the collective policy of our working classes, you will find that they adhere, as a rule, to some kind of market standard, call it trade union wages or whatever you like. What they generally demand is fairness and justice, and any system of charity is intensely distasteful to them. They are well aware that, if wages were not regulated on the basis of supply and demand, but by the generosity and charity of the employers, favouritism would be inevitable, and even the best labourers might starve for want of work. To what extent they are influenced by the idea of fairness and a fixed standard may be judged from the policy of the trade unions as to level wages. We have in our works a great number of men who could earn higher wages than they do now ; but such personal

advantages to them would mean a reduction of wages according to ability for the less strong and less skilled labourers. It is the sacrifice on the part of some for the good of all which we are bound to admire, though I am convinced that the sacrifice is useless."

At this point the lady of the house, who, as I afterwards learned, is a member of some Association with the mission of protecting the wages of working women, joined in the conversation by remarking:—

"I am afraid," she said, "that the trades unions are not so generous to women as they are to men. There is a mass of trade union rules which results simply in lower wages for the women, and higher wages for the men. How often have we not meetings of women's associations consisting chiefly of men, and women's deputations composed exclusively of men—all aiming at some kind of interference with women's work, and all tending towards reducing their wages under the pretext of protecting women against long hours and rough work. I call that neither gallant nor generous."

"I know, my dear, that this is the case," said her husband, "and I hail with satisfaction any efforts to put a stop to the clamour for such unfortunate State interference. If men are desirous of improving the hours and the chances of employment of working women, they should see that their wages are increased, and that their resources are augmented, before they deprive them of honest work. But, at the same time, it would not be fair—at least, in the majority of cases—to attribute the policy of the trade unions with regard to women's work to selfishness, jealousy, or hypocrisy. It is simply the

outcome of an economic misconception, for which the University economists and the extreme Collectivist portion of the press are more responsible than the working men. They are apt to start from the fallacious supposition that the available opportunities of work are a stable factor in the problem, or a fixed and, under all the circumstances, an unchangeable quantity ; and that, consequently, the more a certain number work, and the more cheaply they work, the less work and the less wages will there be for others. Of course, the truth is the exact opposite—that is to say, the more some individuals work, and the less they consume, the more wealth there is for the others.”

“That seems right,” said his wife ; “but could you elucidate it by an example from experience?”

“Perhaps I may be allowed,” said Mr. X., “to refer to an experience in our own firm. We ship large quantities of ready-made linen articles to South America, for example. The manufacturing of these involves a great deal of sewing and embroidery. When that part of the work used to be made by hand, the goods were dear, and we sold only a small quantity. Now, when machinery allows us to produce these goods at a trifling cost, we ship very large quantities. The result to the linen weavers is, of course, that the demand for linen has increased, and that wages have gone up. From this it follows, I think, that the less wages the workers in one of the processes of manufacture accept, the more there remains out of the total price of sale of the articles for the other workers. What I have said about the linen trade holds good of every other industry. Actualities, then, completely confirm the abstract economic law

your husband quoted—that the more cheaply one working man works, the better for all the others.”

“Most decidedly,” said our host; “but unfortunately the working of that economic law is not everywhere so easily followed as in the production of highly-finished articles. Besides, it is obscured, and in many cases prevented from operating by legislative violence.”

“I am glad,” I said, “that you blame not the hearts of the working men, but only their brains.”

“Say rather their lack of information,” put in the host.

“Granted,” I resumed, *pour revenir à nos moutons*, “that Ireland is over-taxed, what form of relief would you recommend?”

“Before deciding upon such a vital matter,” he replied, “I should require to study the question more minutely; but I might be inclined in favour of a reduction of taxes all round. The administrative difficulties are by no means insurmountable. Only a few years ago the Whisky Tax in Ireland was 1s. 8d. lower than in England, and, if that was workable, a difference in taxes on tea, coffee, chocolate, etc., is perfectly possible. If the English and the Scotch dislike these differences, let them follow suit, and let them also take a step in the direction of sound economy. A Budget of one hundred millions is absurdly high, and the local rates in Great Britain are simply ruinous. Let Parliament stop useless State-interfering expenses, and let charity be practised by those who can afford it, and not carried on with money extorted by violence from people who can use it far better than the State in their own industries, and who often have to go to the wall, ruined by high taxes and



rates, or by the paralyzing influence these exercise on trade."

"And do you expect that representative and influential Irishmen will all join hands in demanding fair taxation?" I asked.

Our host shook his head, looked grave, but said nothing. After a moment's silence, Mr. Y. said:—

"I know my friend is not sanguine with regard to a solid Irish front; but I think most Irishmen regard this as a God-sent opportunity to obtain justice for this unhappy island."

"You seem to attach a great deal of importance to the Financial Report," I said, turning to Mr. Y., who had, as I afterwards heard, a great reputation for learning.

"It isn't the Report alone which constitutes the opportunity," he resumed. "The political position in Great Britain, as well as the situation in Parliament, offers just now a great chance for practical questions. The people are sick to death of party squabbles and abortive measures, and our legislators are beginning to understand that they must soon face the fact that the old party demarcations are fast becoming obliterated, and that the House, like the rest of the civilized world, is gradually shaking itself into two great camps—Collectivists and Individualists—differing in the two great questions, whether we shall progress towards a state of degrading slavery under Government and the bureaucrats, or towards a system of ennobling personal liberty. The antagonism of the two new parties is becoming daily more marked, because it has been found that Collectivism means individual poverty, and Individualism means individual prosperity. Public opinion and the

Man in the Street may not as yet have grasped this fact ; but to all thinking men it is clear that to enrich the State by impoverishing the individuals is actually to impoverish the State ; and to enrich all the individuals is actually to enrich the State. One effect of the new situation is that the hollow party cries must cease from troubling. Any demand for Home Rule, for example, must now instantaneously evoke the question whether Home Rule for Ireland means Collectivism for Ireland, or Individualism for Ireland ? It will now become patent to every sensible man that the Irish Question is a question of prosperity."

The daughter of the house, who had been listening intently to the conversation, hereupon exclaimed, somewhat excitedly :

"What a pity and a shame it is that Ireland, at this important crisis, should be so badly represented."

"I am much obliged for the compliment, my dear Patricia," said her father, evidently amused.

"Oh ! father, of course I don't mean you," she said, blushing. "I mean those wretched, squabbling Home Rulers. Had ever a country such representatives ?"

"Is that also your opinion," I asked Mr. Y.—"that the Home Rulers are bad representatives of Ireland ? Or do you think that this young lady's party feeling runs a little too high ?"

"I think it is the general opinion of educated Irishmen that the Home Rule brigade largely consist of people who should not represent their country in Parliament."

"You mean, I suppose," said I, "that they have been tainted with the corruption which is so rampant in most parts of the world ?"

"Certainly not," was his reply, "I do not think them corrupt. I am willing to admit that they are animated by a sincere patriotism, but they are ciphers."

"Ah! I see what you mean," I said. "They are men of no standing—poor men, who have to look for financial support from others in order to keep up their position. You believe probably, as many do, that before a man should claim to manage the business of his country, he should show his ability to manage his own business, so as to, at least, gain independence?"

"No," he replied emphatically, "I should be sorry to have such priggish opinions. The poorest man in Parliament may be as good as the richest. The management of his own affairs is no criterion of his qualities as a statesman. Cobden, for example, was not famous for looking after his own interests, but he gained millions of wealth for England."

"But what, then, are your objections," I asked, "to the Home Rule members?"

"My objection is that they do not represent Ireland. The Parliamentary representatives of a country should be elected by the people for some personal ability or quality inherent in themselves, and not because they agree to be mere voting machines following such and such a leader. A country is not well represented unless each district sends its best man—the man who has proved by some action, by some deed or some work, that he has some kind of ability in him, that he has the interests of the people more at heart than others, and that his mind is able to grapple with the important subject with which he has to deal. Besides, we must believe that hardly any of the Home Rulers have taken the trouble to

master the rudiments of the science of legislation. They seem to have no remedies against Ireland's evils. Such measures as they suggest or support are invariably economically unsound, and calculated to aggravate the poverty of the country. If they had a clearer grasp of the needs of Ireland, they would not be constantly indulging in quarrels among themselves about personal affairs, Sustentation Funds, and other minor matters."

"That's it," said the daughter of the house. "Why should they for ever quarrel among themselves? Irishmen should always be ready to sacrifice everything on the altar of their country."

"My dear young lady, in order to be just to these men, we must take into consideration under what circumstances they were elected," said Mr. X. "At the time of the last General Election even it was not generally understood that Home Rule was a meaningless term, but, on the contrary, most Irishmen had been taught to believe that it meant the fulfilment of the highest aspirations of each one of them. Even you, my young extremist, will agree that there are men among the Home Rulers of whom any country might be proud. These Home Rulers, upon whom you all seem to be so hard, had only one mandate—to support Home Rule—and to this they have been faithful. If the best men of Ireland represented Ireland in Parliament, there can be little doubt that the Irish nation, as part owner of the Empire, with England's immense wealth to back it, and the two parties in Parliament competing for their votes, might have been a model country. But where do you find now-a-days a Parliament consisting of the best men of the country? and where do you find a

country that could serve as a model in regard to government and legislation? Even you, as an American," he said, turning to me, "would not claim this proud position for the United States."

"Well," I said, "I don't think we are much worse off than other nations in that respect. At the same time, I won't deny that, as far as I can judge, from this distance—I live in England now—there is a growing opinion in America that, if our legislators would just go on strike, or take a holiday for ten years, the country would be much better off. But what attitude do you expect the bulk of the Home Rulers in Parliament will take with regard to the Irish Finance question?"

"I trust," said our host, "that they will understand that the question will be a test question, and that they will see their way to drop their exasperating faction fights, and stand up for old Ireland."

Finding there was no more to be learned, I declined any further hospitality, and withdrew.

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## VIII.

### A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF.

IN case any portion of the Imperial taxes were to be shifted from Irish to English shoulders, the burden would, of course, in the last instance, fall on the wage-

earners, perhaps not directly, but in the aggravated form of worse business, more stagnation, and less wealth for the wealth-producers. I was, therefore, anxious to have the opinion of some of the sons of toil in this kingdom—all the more so, as the working man's vote is now-a-days the compass to be steered by.

Guided by previous experience, I went straight to a cottage in a long, dark street in a large manufacturing town in Lancashire. It was the house of Mr. Scott, a boiler-maker, between fifty and sixty years of age, who enjoys a great reputation among his fellow workers for intelligence and integrity. I found him in his little parlour deeply engaged over some papers, and busy over some trade-union work. As time pressed, I did not think of changing my appearance, but entered his house in the same character that I assumed at Belfast.

"I should like to have a chat with you," I said, "on politics, if you can spare a moment."

"How is this?" he said, offering me a chair; "I don't know of an election on, but I suppose you're a lady canvasser."

"No," I said, "I am not, and, if I were, I wouldn't waste my time in trying to influence so strong a man as yourself. I just crave only for some information with regard to the Lancashire workers' opinion on the Irish Finance question."

"I can't be responsible for other people's opinions, but you're welcome to mine if they're of any use to you."

As he spoke, the door opened, and there came into the room a middle-sized man with a mild, dreamy expression in his large blue eyes, a thin, straggling, long beard, and a profusion of light brown hair.



"This is Mr. Robertson," said Scott, "one of those who differ from me in political questions, though a good friend of mine. He is a Socialist, out and out, and you might like to have his opinion too."

"Certainly," I said, "I rather like out and outers, for they have at least an opinion. It's the mugwamps who sit on a fence, and the opportunists who have no opinion at all, that I can't bear. Besides, I believe there are more unselfish people in the ranks of the Socialists than in any other party."

"It isn't unselfishness that's wanting in my friend Robertson," said Scott. "In my opinion, his fault is that he is determined to sacrifice himself to an impossible dream."

We all sat round the coke fire, and my first question to Scott was whether he thought it right that the taxes in Ireland should be reduced by increasing the taxes in England.

"You are putting these two questions into one. That Ireland is overtaxed no working man will deny. I have but little personal experience of Ireland myself, but I know many Irish working men who have settled here; and it is only too plain that the people of Ireland are ground down by taxes as much as we are here."

"But the working classes of England are supposed to pay no taxes, except when they spend their money on luxuries."

"Luxuries!" he said, as a smile played round his lips. "Cheap tobacco, beer, spirits, tea, coffee, and cocoa are luxuries, are they, for the use of which the working man should be punished by taxation in a ruinous proportion to his small wages? But let us leave the luxuries out,

and let us consider the other taxes we, as well as the Irish, have to pay."

"But what are those taxes?" I asked. "The landlord pays the house taxes on cottages like these."

"Yes, I know that's the theory; but let us look at the reality. Who pays the landlord? And do you think the landlord wouldn't include the tax in his rent?"

"But just look here," I said; "the rent is not determined by the amount of taxes the landlord pays, but by the competition for the houses. If the Property Tax were abolished, the bidding for the houses would be as high as ever, and the landlord would get the benefit."

"That's a fallacy, madam," said Scott, "which has been current a long time. With the present scarcity of good investment, such an increase in the income for house property would be sure to produce more houses and better dwellings—a thing of which we all stand in great need. It's the tax that prevents landlords from building more than they do, and from building decently. But this is not the only way on which the tax on house property crushes us. If the amount, or part of the amount, now collected in taxes was spent in better dwellings, there would be more work to do in the building trades, and a mass of labourers who are now idle and houseless would be busy, so to speak, building their own homes. In the same way, excessive taxation prevents shoemakers from having boots, and tailors from having clothes."

"How can that be?" I asked. "Are not the scarcity of employment and low wages the consequences of over production?"

At this question the Socialist Robertson burst into satirical laughter.

"They are delightful with their over-production," he cried out. "Over-production! when not one man, woman, or child in a thousand has got enough of anything."

"No, no," said Scott, shaking his head seriously, "there's no over-production. A lecturer some time ago came down here and made it perfectly clear that what we suffer from is not over-production, but under-consumption. The two things are opposite evils, and require opposite remedies. It's over-taxation that leads to under-consumption. The people can't consume that which the Government extort from them. A man can't give away his cake and have it. But the House Tax doesn't fall directly as heavily on us as on the poor fellows who for business require more than a dwelling cottage, and on poor women who try to make a living by taking in lodgers. These people are constantly paying out all they can scrape together in taxes and rates of some kind, while the trades suffer because their customers have to pay taxes and rates. Look at Jones, a friend of mine. He's got a boot shop, especially for repairs. He fell ill for two weeks, and the tax-collector came, and he hadn't the money. The best thing to do in such cases would be for the people to go straight to the Union with their whole family. If they did, the eyes of Parliament would be opened regarding the consequences of taxation, and our Town and County Councillors would be less eager for Betterment, Free Baths, and Free Libraries. But Jones was sanguine, and did not want to go to the work-house with his large family, though he had for many years paid a heavy Poor Rate. He got a loan from a money-lender, a thing they always do, to such an extent

as to make one believe that Parliament is the handmaid of the usurer. Jones's brother, his brother-in-law, and an aunt of his who kept a small milliner's shop—people who, by sheer hard work and self-denial, had managed to get their little homes together—went security for Jones. Then, for want of proper food, sickness came into his house, and his guarantors had to pay several instalments. Owing to delays, more taxes, and more rates, the money-lender got them all in his clutches, and they now are all ruined, and have had their homes stripped of every stick. Well, you can understand that for each family that goes to the workhouse, or is plunged into abject poverty, trade suffers, and we wage-earners have to pay the piper.'

"But what's to be done?" I said; "the country can't exist without taxes, and if taxes laid on rich landlords fall finally on the poor lodger and the working man, what is to be done?"

"Very much can be done, but I will only put it to you whether it is fair in a Christian country to make people pay taxes who do not earn enough to live upon? And I do believe it can be proved unsound, financially, in the long run."

"But if you think the Irish, as well as the English, are overtaxed, you would not think of increasing the taxes in England in order to ease the Irish people? Would you oppose the Government if that were attempted?"

"I would blame the Government; but to oppose the Government is another question. If they were to resign, we should get the Liberals in, and that would mean more taxes and more rates, and, therefore, lower wages. I used to be a Liberal myself, as also my friend Robert-

son here ; but while I've become a Conservative, Robertson has turned a Socialist. My belief and hope is that the present Government will, as soon as they can, stop all legislation that interferes with trade and wages, and gradually retrench all unnecessary expenditure. Taxes may then be reduced, and, if trade is allowed to expand here and in the colonies, the revenue will far exceed the requirements. Taxes for unnecessary expenditure should be voluntary, for then those who want Betterment and Socialistic expenditure would have to pay for them, and Englishmen would at last be free."

"That'll never be," said Robertson ; "the only way is to go for complete Socialism."

Here a discussion between Scott and Robertson followed, Robertson insisting that Government would be perfect, and the citizens entirely devoted to the Government.

As Robertson spoke he grew more and more excited. His face became flushed, his eyes dilated, and his whole body was agitated by nervous gesticulation. Presently Scott rose from his seat and left the room.

Being anxious to bring back Robertson, who was now enlarging upon Bellamy's book, "Looking Backward," to the question of Irish Finance, I took the opportunity, while he was drawing a long breath, to ask him what opinion the Socialists in general held on taxation in Ireland.

"We Socialists," he said, "believe that the poor people of Ireland are ruined, not by taxes, but by rents. Our remedy is the abolition of landlordism and the socialization of land and the means of production."

"And do you really believe," I said, "that the Irish

people, as well as the English working-classes, can be induced to make an experiment with complete Socialism, while the present generation is still alive, and accept the consequences of the transition period?"

"It is the duty of the present generation," cried Robertson, with an expression of either inspiration or fanaticism, "to sacrifice everything for the future happiness of humanity. But no sacrifice will be required. Socialism is furthered by every party and by every class. Landlords and capitalists further Socialism, not from a sense of duty, but for the sake of the party flesh-pots. The Church of England, through her bishops and deans, furthers Socialism, though the Church endowments will become the first contribution to the Socialistic State. Providence has struck them blind, so that they may work their own destruction. The Liberal party is utterly helpless without the Socialists and Socialistic principles. The Walthamstow election has shown them how to win over almost every constituency in the country. They have only to withdraw the old-style Liberal candidates, the apostles of property, in every constituency where they are not absolutely certain to win, and to concentrate the Radical, the Socialist, and the Labour vote on one candidate, and the Conservatives will never be in power again."

At this point the door opened, and Scott returned, bringing with him a tall, middle-aged man, with a short-cut beard and hair, originally black, and now sprinkled with grey. His prominent feature was a large, well-shaped nose, between two deep-sunk, penetrating, grey eyes.

"Allow me, madam, to introduce my friend and neighbour, Mr. Shelman," said Scott; "he is an



Anarchist, and I thought you might like to hear the Anarchist view of Irish Finance; so I sent my little girl for him, and here he is."

"I am very much obliged," I said, "and I will thank Mr. Shelman to let me know what he thinks of Irish taxation."

He pulled a chair towards the fire, and sat down leisurely, as if in deep thought.

"Excessive taxation in Ireland is one of the causes of poverty in that country," he said.

"Do you mean the taxes on the poor or the taxes on the rich?" I inquired.

"Both," he said.

"But I understood," I said, "that Anarchists were in favour of the destruction of capital in general, and taxes surely are a means of destroying capital—though more slowly than dynamite."

At this Shelman smiled sardonically.

"We Anarchists do not regard the destruction of capital as one of our objects," he said; "it's only a bad name that the Collectivist press wishes to fix upon us, so that we may be killed. What we want to destroy is the tyranny of capital, which is no good to anybody—not even to the capitalists. If this cannot be done without destroying the capitalists, we should certainly exterminate them in their present organization; and, if we could not destroy the capitalists without destroying capital, then, and then only, should we destroy the result of previous labour. Every pound's worth of capital destroyed tells against the wage-earners. But personal liberty is worth more than all the capital in the world, and will have to be considered first."

"But," interrupted Robertson, excitedly, "if you hand over the capital to the people, there can be no tyranny of capital."

"Exactly so," said Shelman, calmly. "But when you Socialists say the people, you don't mean the people. You mean the worst enemies of the people—bureaucratic rulers; the body that levies the taxes, that regulates and compels, is necessarily antagonistic to those who have to pay, submit, and work under compulsion. There is, therefore, only one road to liberty—the abolition of Government."

"Abolish Government!" cried Robertson, "and allow murder and robbery?"

"Oh! if you are going to turn murderer and robber because Government is abolished, I'm sorry for you," said the Anarchist. "As far as I know, you would be the only man with such inclinations in the whole neighbourhood; and, as we should be a thousand against one, we should be able to check you."

"And are you not of opinion," I said, "that the different factions of Ireland would rush at each other's throats if the expenses of Government—and, consequently, Government—were reduced to the smallest possible proportions?"

"No," he replied. "All the apples of discord would have disappeared. What the Irish are apt to fight about is leaderships, Government appointments, monopolies, privileges, State doles, Government contracts, duties, taxation, and a host of other miseries inflicted upon them by legislation. Every Irishman is by nature an Anarchist, and always ready to rebel against the slightest authority exercised over him. Liberty alone will succeed

in Ireland. The Home Rulers don't see this, and have given a Socialistic and bureaucratic character to their Utopia. The Irish people can never become Socialists."

Here Robertson broke out into an energetic protest, which led to a violent discussion between the two men and threatened to degenerate into personalities and invective. With great tact, I succeeded in re-establishing peace, and the two antagonists departed peacefully, though unconvinced.

Scott came and stood before me, and said :

"These two men have given you an example of the great cause underlying the suffering of both the Irish and the English people—the discord between the victims of bad legislation. They are apt to blame the leaders, especially the Government in power ; but they forget that we are a free nation governing ourselves, and that men like Lord Salisbury, Mr. Balfour, and others, can hold the power only by the sanction of public opinion."

"Do you, then, believe that the country has confidence in the present Cabinet?" I said.

"Yes ; if you except the fanatical factions," he said, pointing to the door. "I find that the people begin to understand the situation. The men are not to blame, but the system—the party system."

"And is there a remedy against party system?"

"Oh, yes !" he said ; "there is the remedy of rotten eggs and dead cats."

"Rotten eggs and dead cats !" I said. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," he said, "that if the people bombarded with these projectiles every candidate who dared to come on to the platform and declared himself a party man

instead of a patriot, we should soon see a wonderful difference. We are moving in that direction. Already, now, the taint of party politics must be absent from anything intended to gain the confidence of the masses. With a well-reasoned public opinion behind them, our present leaders would be able to reduce taxation both in Ireland and here, and promote a progressive prosperity, and advance the great object of civilization—personal liberty.”

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Here the reports of Julia ceased. Nothing that I could do would induce her to resume communications. It now remained for our Commission of Two to frame our Report for our friends. But, considering that the evidence supplied is short, concise, and clear, the moral to be drawn from it might safely be left to those of the great public of these islands who have a heart for their suffering fellow-men, a soul above lucre, and sufficient brains to take an interest in public affairs.









